THE

CATHOLIC WEEKLY INSTRUCTOR;

Or, Miscellany of

RELIGIOUS, INSTRUCTIVE, AND ENTERTAINING KNOWLEDGE.

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LETTERS FROM BELGIUM.

LETTER VI.

Continued from page 209.

CHRISTMAS EVE has arrived, with all its cheerful bell-ringing, and joyous anticipations of to-morrow. I have been down into the village, that old-fashioned place, where old-fashioned customs are kept up, and among them that of religiously wishing each other a "Holy High Feast," or more literally a "High Feast of Salvation," on our great church festivals, which in the Catholic church begin with the eve preceding them. I have had my share of such holy wishes this afternoon. The church is solemnly occupied with confession, and though numbers are there, a breathing could be heard through the stillness. I remained till it was too dark to remain any longer prudently, for the holy scene is to me most edifying. The clock struck four, and it was pleasant to remember that when it next struck that hour we should be all assembling to await the arrival of our Infant Saviour. You probably know that it was the ancient usage of the church to have midnight services on this great anniversary, in order to celebrate it as nearly as possible in accordance with the reality, and our books still retain the service for midnight. Circumstances have rendered it expedient to defer the first service till later in the night; our first service is at five. This obliges us to rise at four in order to dress and be in church in time. Some must rise much earlier, who have still to confess, or who live at a distant part of the parish. No one would miss the service of Christmas, but from the direst necessity; as for children, they anticipate it weeks before, and scarcely dare to sleep all night, lest they should be forgotten and left at home. I confess I rank among their number, and count Christmas Day amongst the most joyous of my year. This gladness of heart is produced for us by the preparation we have had from our vigilant mother the church. Every thing during Advent has led us to the contemplation of the mystery of, and awakened us to rejoice in, the birth of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. Our services have been beautiful: the little hints of the approaching festival scattered up and down between each psalm and portion of scripture I long to copy out for you. They have been to us like the pale streaks of dawn, keeping the eye fixed upon, and guiding us on towards the spot, where the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel is to arise, becoming stronger and more decided, more lovely and more glowing as the moment approaches when the new-born King shall arise upon our expectant vision. I *must* give you two or three of our antiphons.

Antiphon said with the Venite exultemus: "The King of those who come, let us adore Him." Alternately repeated, with the last part—"Let us adore Him. Behold the King cometh. We expect the salvation of God, Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like His glorious body. He shall come, as it was said, and shall deliver us."

Yet it is almost a pity to separate these delicate touches from the beautiful and perfectly finished whole. You will, I trust, one day possess these sublime devotions.

Christmas Day. Punctually at four this morning, the bells of each parish church began their peal of welcome, and aroused us from our beds to meet in our several village churches, to adore the "King of those who come" in the stall of Bethlehem. The morning was clear, and cold, and moonlight, which favoured our dressing in our very best, this honour being reserved for such high festivals among our pious neighbours, and which we like to imitate—but the moon did *not* favour our requiring a lantern, much to my disappointment. The glad voices of the people, assembling by various roads and pathways, greeted us as we entered the village and church-yard. All was brightness, and joy, and bustle as we entered the church; smiles and exchanges of kind looks met us on every side, of course no word was spoken, as each was about to communicate, and feeling, accordingly, devoutly recollected, though joyous. Our little ancient church looked her very best, brightly lighted by chandeliers, each bearing many lights suspended down the middle aisle, with smaller lights on the walls of the side aisles. The High Altar and Sanctuary were tastefully hung with draperies of pale pink and green silk, and rich laces. A transparency in Flemish of coloured letters, "Glory be to God in the highest," was placed very high between the Corinthian pillars, which form part of the Altar-piece. Above this were two sculptured angels bearing garlands, so placed as to seem ready to fling them at the feet of Him who was "to come." Coloured lamps placed here and there about the sculpture of the sanctuary, brought out the whole with much effect; and the immense silver candlesticks (imitation silver) of the altar glittered and sparkled with millions of rays, surrounded as they were by so many lights. Our little Mass-boys, dressed

in their white surplices and scarlet collars and sashes, were in full activity, preparing incense, bringing in bells, &c. Precisely at five our Priest entered the sanctuary, dressed in rich white silk embroidered with gold. The organ played, and all were on their knees. Our private matin service had by its "Invitation" aroused our attention to the work before us: "Christ is born unto us, come, let us adore Him:" we "approached the altar of God" to offer the great sacrifice in solemn act of adoration, and the service of the Mass began, which you now understand.

No one, I feel sure, remembered that it was cold, or early, or that they were fasting, as every one must be, as I have told you, to receive the holy sacrament. There was too much of beautiful, and holy, and exciting, to think of any thing else but enjoying it. At the "Gloria in excelsis," in addition to the organ, several sweet-toned little bells were rung by children, producing an effect almost too moving at this moment of excitement.

The paten in which the Host is offered, is brought by the Priest to the altar-rail of the sanctuary to be kissed by the congregation. This is called the offering; those who go up to kiss it, doing so as a token of their uniting themselves with the great Offering about to be made for us, and of their offering themselves with it.

The whole of the service is accompanied by chanting and music, and sweet words fall on the ear at intervals from the choir, keeping up the attention to the object of our being assembled: "To us born," "to us given," &c. At length the moment approaches of receiving the Incarnate God, just born, so to speak, upon our altar. The Priest having himself received the communion in both kinds, a confession of sins is recited aloud by an assistant at the Mass; the communicants leave their places, and assemble in the centre aisle before the altar, all kneel on the ground, and placing their hands in a position for prayer, recite the confession secretly, each smiting their breast three times at the words, "I have sinned, by my fault, by my fault, by my exceeding great fault." The Priest turns to give a general absolution, and then taking the sacred vessel in his left hand containing the consecrated Host, takes one up with his right hand, and elevating it, says very solemnly, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world" —"Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof, speak the word only and my soul shall be healed."

This he repeats three times, each time he pronounces the words, "Lord, I am not worthy," one loud stroke is given upon a bell by an assistant. This is a beautiful scene, the kneeling congregation, striking their breasts slowly and devoutly at each stroke of the bell as the Priest stands with the sacred Host upraised.

He then approaches the altar-rail, and a number of communicants, sufficient to fill the rail, approach, and each receives the sacred element.

These retire, with their hands joined and their eyes cast down, to make way for another number.

But how to speak of the feelings of a Roman Catholic at holy communion! Who shall ask, Is Christ divided now? All thought, all cavil, are absorbed in the joy of realizing our Mother's faithful teaching. "Christ is born unto us—let us adore Him." Born that he may be our food—let us adore Him. The "Equal of the Father as touching his Godhead," condescends to become "inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood;" as touching our nature, that He may become equal with us, with me—even me. That "we may be one." "As the Father is in me." (Divine Saviour, it is thy voice which is within me which speaks.) "As the Father is in me, and I in him, so thou, recipient at my altar, mayest be one in me. I in thee, and thou in me, that we may be made perfect in one."

Intimate communion! Christ is now within me: reposing in this my tabernacle of flesh, in the same human nature as my own.

"King of those who come, let me adore Thee."

But who is it that comes? Christ, the King of Glory. But who is it that comes? Christ, by whom the worlds were made, and who rideth upon the circle of the heavens. "King of those who come, let me adore Thee."

But how shall I adore Thee?

Thou art come to me, a fountain of living waters, that I may drink and live for ever; and the fountain is so intimately one with me, that I cannot kneel and quaff of the life-giving stream.

How shall I adore Thee?

Thou art come to me to be my Guest, as to Martha and to Mary, and thou hast made me so thy equal, that I cannot serve thee at my table, nor kneel before thy royal presence in deep adoring love.

How shall I adore Thee?

Thou art come to me as to Thomas, to show me thy scarred side, and the print of nails in thy hands, and thou art too near for me to bathe them with my penitential tears, for all the part I have taken in deepening those wounds.

How shall I adore Thee?

Art thou come to me as to Zacheus, that I may make haste and prepare, for thou wilt eat with me to-day? No, no, thou art come to me that I may eat, and thyself wilt be my banquet. "The bread that I eat is thy flesh, and the wine that I drink is thy blood." Thou invitest me with pressing persuasion: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

Yet why *dost* thou, why *dost* thou come so near? Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof. If thou hadst vouchsafed to converse with me without, would it not have been enough for me? Then, at least, I could have prostrated myself in the dust in adoring veneration. But now, behold, thou art one with me within, and I can only fold my upraised hands across the living temple thou hast chosen, and wherein thou restest, and hold thee there in more intimate communion, than even thy sacred Mother knew, when she cradled Thee an Infant in her maternal arms.

"Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for" surely "I have seen thy salvation."

The communion ended, the Priest returns to the altar, and concludes the Mass.

The Church, to show the excess of her joy, permits every Priest to celebrate three Masses, the only day in the year when such an extraordinary permission is allowable; no Priest being allowed to offer the christian sacrifice more than once a day, without some imperative cause. These three Masses used to be celebrated at intervals during the night and at the early morning, but it is found necessary much to lay aside a custom so holy and edifying in itself on account of abuse made of it by the wicked; and the three Masses here and in many places now follow each other immediately. The Priest merely returns to the foot of the altar, as soon as one Mass is ended, to begin another. As it is required of every catholic to remain some time in devotion after receiving the blessed sacrament, we much like to hear a Mass at this season of devout feeling, and to offer it as an act of thanksgiving. The whole congregation, therefore, remains to this second Mass; and the third following immediately, we should not like to leave unless too weak to remain, which some persons are from fasting. By the time this third Mass was over, day had begun to dawn, it being some time after seven. Hot coffee and rolls are prepared in the shops and private houses of the near neighbours of the church, for those to partake of whose homes are distant. Every house is quickly filled with guests. Our kind baker's wife generally invites the children of the first communion of last year to take this refreshing repast in her house; but I hear that good Anna brought a little stranger babe herself into the world last evening, shortly before midnight, to keep the anniversary of her Saviour's birth. So I fear our sweet little closely-hooded girls in their plaited caps and long black cloaks must go farther for their breakfast.

Very welcome must this arrangement of a ready breakfast be this cold morning. We thought no coffee ever had been so good as ours, nor ever fire had warmed so thoroughly, or burned so brightly as our own; our wood fire gaily blazing in a large vacant chimney, quite unlike any thing English, since the days when England was merry Catholic England, in centuries by-gone. There is another service of three Masses at nine o'clock, in a village interlaced with ours. The second service is performed for those who cannot attend the first; and our people brave fasting well enough to occupy the confessors till Mass begins, in order to be able to communicate. I had proposed going to this service, also of three Masses, but was really so fatigued, that I doubted before I took my coffee, whether I should not be obliged to go to bed, and not be able even to fulfil my promise of writing for you. But this continental antidote of all evils has invigorated my drowsy faculties, and I have written thus far under its reviving effect, though I find it prudent not to go to church again till the time of Vespers, which is two o'clock.

Monday. Our Vespers were fully attended; they are solemnly chanted on this day. Psalms, and hymns, and antiphons in the church's joyous chant in harmony with the day. We had an excellent sermon, given in all the energy of expressive Flemish, with its strong figures and forcible comparisons, exciting to joyfulness and thanksgiving, because, as our private service had also told us, "that Christ being born for us, leaves no room for sadness."

After the sermon there was a benediction service, a very beautiful devotion, which I will explain to you some day. During this a procession, occupying altogether two hours, and sending us home pretty well tired with the day's devotions from early morning.

After church Anna's baby was christened; the church not allowing this most important of all her sacraments to be deferred longer after the birth than is necessary to collect the sponsors.

It is not the custom in Belgium to have feasting, or company, or family meetings on Christmas Day. Children who are at school remain there, students in colleges have no holidays. Each remains quietly where he is, in order to give up their thoughts and feelings wholly to God in religious rejoicing, reserving all festivity and family re-unions for New Year's Day, and the month of January. Indeed our religious duties fatigue us too much to leave great opportunity for any thing else, by which I have heard it complained by Protestants residing in Belgium, who mix chiefly in English society, and do not, therefore, know how Catholics pass their time, that Christmas Day is almost unnoticed by us. A stranger passing through our village might have said so yesterday. I went into the village between the church services, and there was not so much as a child in the street. They were all quietly at home, resting, to be ready for the afternoon's duties. Long before English Protestants have risen, the Catholic Belgians have celebrated the birth of their Divine Saviour by participating in the most sacred rites, and when Englishmen are honouring the day by partaking of every luxury of the table, in company, Catholics are solemnized and disposed only for rest; and many appear to strangers indifferent, whereas they have passed through feelings of the strongest and most exhilarating kind.

Lest you should fear for us, however, that we had quite forgotten Old England in our love for every thing Belgian, I will tell you, that we "*superstitiously*" prepare a very genuine plum-pudding duly on Christmas Eve, to which we would add roast-beef if we could. But Belgian kitchens furnish nothing that could cook the staple food of our native land. By wooing brass ovens, and braise fires, and by sundry other devices, we do contrive to make a joint of beef brown on ordinary days, and call it "roast-beef;" but to eat such a mockery on Christmas Day would, we fear, frighten poor Christmas Day away altogether, and we prefer substituting poultry in its place on that day.

The dinner hour here, every where, and with every body, is *noon*, and we soon found ourselves obliged to be hungry at that hour, or never go out to dine, or receive a friend at home; and we adopted the wholesome dinner hour, now preferring it, finding it advantageous to health, and economical in time, by giving us the whole day after to employ as we please.

On Christmas Day we lay aside our rule, however, and dine by candle-light, in honour of England. Those who share our hospitality, much enjoying the novelty once in a year, and especially relishing the plum-pudding, that outlandish thing, and admiring the evergreen decorations which we distribute abundantly above and around us.

Such a Christmas Day could but be happy. Sanctified by so much that is most sacred, and blessed by so much that is beloved and valued.

Monday is kept holy like a Sunday. Masses in the morning, as on a festival, arranged so that each person may be present at one. Our villagers are dressed in their best all day, and do no work in honour of Christmas. Vespers at two o'clock, and benediction, but no sermon. When the Vespers are over, they pay visits to each other (and take coffee of course) on these days of lesser solemnity, and they are among our most friendly and social. I just ran in to see Anna's baby, who, as I have told you, is a baker's wife; most excellent cake, therefore, and coffee were offered. I partook of these, and hurried away, in order to have time to write for you, which pleasant occupation I must now lay aside for a few days, as *our* grand, visiting, feasting time is fast approaching.

On New Year's Day every body must visit every body, to wish them happiness for the New Year. Not to visit any one on New Year's Day, or as soon as possible afterwards, is to indicate your wish to relinquish that person's society. Presents of little sweet cakes are given by each visitor, called cakes of congratulation. The rule is for the inferior to visit the superior first. An elder Priest is visited first by a younger. Trades-people visit their customers. The poor visit the rich. Children their grandmothers, godmothers, and godfathers, or any one to whom they owe in any way allegiance. The whole parish visits the Pastor. Our visitors are too sincerely kind, to allow of their being sent away empty-handed; and their great joy being to receive something of our own making, of English invention, and if possible, of English material, we make it a rule to devote the leisure of Christmas week to preparing a large assortment of trifles. Our week's work is, therefore, laid out. Adieu till I find time to describe to you our lukke days, or days of congratulation.

Jan. 1, 1843.—The evening of this very busy day I sit down, faithful to my intention, to give you an account of it. I am very tired, having been in incessant occupation from five this morning, at which hour I rose in order to be ready at six to receive my first visitors, the children from the farm. I have forgotten to tell you that all godmothers, and grandmothers, and such dignitaries, have the advantage of being roused from their morning sleep by their grandchildren and godchildren, should they have the good fortune to reside in their neighbourhood. It is considered as a real sorrow to those children who are too late to announce the New Year to them in person, waking them out of their sleep, by throwing gauffres (the little cakes) on their bed. We being the only near neighbours to the farm, it is the privilege of our little wooden-shoed rosy pets to make the announcement to us. We agreeing not to know any thing about New Year's having arrived, or that there is such a person in the world as New Year, till they come to tell us, if they will only let us get up without being waked out of our sleep, and be down stairs ready to receive them. "Mother" would keep them till daylight, fearing they might arouse us before agreeable; but the ceremony would lose half its charm, and we always beg they may be allowed to come as soon as they see the lights from our windows. For this they, therefore, duly look out, and came this morning laughing through the star-light at six o'clock. Each little hand was filled with gauffres, and as there is a goodly group of kind Coleta's little ones, my lap was literally filled by the time I had received all, and enough of innocent congratulation to make me happy for the year. Our little bazaar was lighted ready for their reception. Our own productions of the week were handsomely added to by a kind present I had received from England, of cotton work-bags, lengths of coloured prints, and gay handkerchiefs; which I dare say you think all very trifling, and not worth writing about; but you would not say so, had you lived for several years out of England. I longed to keep them all for myself, and thought England had never produced such pretty things while I lived there. Hung about the walls, and festooned, they gave, what we humble Belgians, one and all, thought, quite a splendid appearance to the room, and to the tables filled with our own productions.

My little friends were led into the room to choose a New Year's Gift, and before they had made their choice others arrived, keeping up in succession till eight o'clock, which was church-time. The principal parishioners go the first thing into the sacristy to congratulate the Pastor. On our return our elder neighbours began to come, and cakes of congratulation and other refreshments were given to them, leaving us not one moment's time till half-past ten, the time of the second Mass. At twelve the service over, we dined in quiet, as every body was dining also; but at one new guests arrived. At this time the pastor's house is besieged. The gates and doors stand open, and people and cakes pour in as a stream. At two are Vespers, which when over, we called on the Priests who live near enough to be visited that day. Found them all full of visitors: we received presents of cakes, and took refreshment: quite impossible to refuse on such a day. We then hurried home to receive the clerk, whom we had appointed to come at dusk with a little orphan niece he is kindly breeding up. Little Laodie came with her uncle, and was much amused with all "the pretty English things," from which she was desired to select one; and liked apples much better than cakes, of which she seemed heartily tired, as I think we all were. Our kind Pastor has just been in, fatigued as he was, to show us the attention of this indispensable visit. As soon as he could be released from his own guests, his next duty was to visit the elder Priests, and then to receive them, and thus had only just returned. These days are most

fatiguing, but very delightful, and I do not think any one would exchange them against the rest they might enjoy by shutting themselves up and seeing no one on this day of mutual kindness and christian good fellowship. Our church encourages all this social feeling; but I must not begin to talk about the church, for, as you must perceive, I am almost asleep, and by no means able to moralize. So I will conclude by wishing you a Flemish New Year; that is, "I wish you a holy and happy New Year of salvation, and many following years, should it be for your salvation."

Jan. 25.—I have an opportunity of sending off my letter, and must, therefore, bring it to a close. I am afraid to tell you how merry we all are this merry-making month, because in my last letter I described our other gay season, *Kermis*, and you will think we pass all our time in visiting and feasting. Please do not think so, as it would be quite a libel on our industry and general hard-working. Remember, since I sent my last letter four months have passed. During these we have been ploughing, and sowing, and felling trees, and digging, and thrashing; housing potatoes, and fruit, and wood, and killing our pigs for the year's meat; spinning, and knitting, and sewing, besides our religious duties, some of which I have described to you. Now our good Mother the church provides us with recreation, and encourages us to seek it in the social intercourse of the new year congratulations. New Year's Day over, we proceed to visit more distant friends and relatives. This year the weather is especially favourable for our peregrinations to congratulate godfathers and godmothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers, who live at a distance, or any other superior to whom we owe this mark of respect. To these we carry, of course, our never-failing little cakes, and in return for which those poor besieged personages are bound to give us new frocks, or caps, or hats, or jackets, or cloaks, or kerchiefs, as it may be. Again we are seen trooping about from village to village; but by no means in white stockings, or petticoats, or any summer finery: we have too much sense of propriety to act so out of order. Comfortable black worsted stockings, black cloth petticoats, dark gowns, and long black cloth cloaks, with hoods to keep our heads warm, is now our respectable winter dress.

The good order and management of our peasantry are really beyond all praise. It is easily seen that a master spirit must be working underneath to produce a result so beautiful and so gratifying to witness. People so entirely shut out from the knowledge of the world, could never devise for themselves a system of arrangement, which works itself out in the most trifling details. There is so much unity, too, in all they do, and so much good common sense. Whence do they derive it all?

From the constant vigilance of their clergy; and the great means of access to their interior government is the *confessional*. This letter is intended to introduce you to confession. But the most important knowledge regarding it which I can give you, is to show you its effects. To these I shall turn your attention from time to time, in the details I shall give you of the daily, correct, and wise, and sober living of the peasantry of Catholic Belgium. With these simple creatures the confessional has full power, and these are the fruits it produces. With the rich and the worldly the confessional has a very secondary influence, and the result is in accordance with its weakened exertion. In proportion as the confessional has power, so in proportion are the people strong in good common sense, holy in life, and wise in action.

[*To be continued.*]

HASTY CORRECTIONS TO BE AVOIDED.

Corrections are aptly compared to physic: and as no one would like to take a prescription from a physician dictated under the paroxysm of anger, in the same manner no one should attempt to give correction to a child or pupil under its influence. To obviate this inconvenience, it would be very advisable to put down upon paper the fault, with all its aggravating circumstances, and to read it to the offender the next day, when both the master and child can form a better judgment of the offence, and of the measure and nature of the punishment. A farther motive for this circumspection, is the very great danger of error in all hasty decisions formed on the spur of the moment. On such occasions, reason is seldom permitted to preside, and to exercise all her just rights. Pride, self-love, and prejudice, dispute the empire with her. Hence we should regularly suspect our first impressions, weigh in a just balance the merits and demerits of the cause, and come to no decision without the most mature deliberation. The human mind, like the ancient city of Athens, is rarely governed by a Solon, but frequently by overbearing tyrants. The inimitable Fenelon teaches that small rewards for virtue will act with greater effect, than great punishments for crimes; and that honour and shame are the most powerful agents with those who are acquanted with the human heart.—It was a saying of the sweet and amiable St. Francis of Sales: "Be always meek:"—"with a single spoonful of honey you may attract more flies than with a hundred barrels of vinegar. If you lean to any extreme, let it be to that of meekness. There is no soil, however barren, that will prove unproductive, if softened with the dew of meekness, and the milk of human kindness."

No wise man doubts that the Reformation was imperfect, or that in the Romish church there were many good institutions, and practices, and feelings, *which it would be most desirable to restore* amongst ourselves. Daily church services, frequent communions, memorials of our Christian calling continually presented to our notice, in crosses and way-side oratories, commemorations of holy men, of all times and countries, the doctrine of the communion of saints practically taught, religious orders, especially of women, of different kinds, and of different rules, all these would be purely beneficial.—*Preface to Dr. Arnold's Sermons on the Christian Life*, p. 56.

Slander.—"It does not depend upon me," said the Grecian, "to prevent being ill spoken of; it is only in my power that it be not done deservedly."

ENGLISH STORIES.

No. 1.

Continued from page 204.

"Alfred's little fleet gained him two victories, and Gothrun went back into the middle parts of England; but at last surprising Alfred at Chippenham, he hemmed him in between the rivers Parret and Thone, so that he was separated from all his friends, and obliged to skulk about in marshes and woods, to save his life, without food, and often without knowing where to beg a bit of bread. Many stories are told of this part of his life, and the wonderful things which happened to him while it lasted. Some of these, perhaps, were invented after his death, when his friends looked upon him as almost a saint; some, perhaps, were *symbolical*, or represented real facts in a figurative way, according to the spirit of a time, when men were always willing to believe more than they saw; some are certainly true, and have escaped being destroyed by modern critics. One day, being very hungry, Alfred wandered into the hut of a swineherd in the forest, where he begged for a bit of bread. The swineherd's wife, being a thrifty soul, promised him some supper if he would work for it, and told him to watch the cakes which were baking in the hot ashes. Alfred being very busy making a bow and arrows, and, moreover, having more than enough of sad thoughts in his mind, forgot the cakes, which were burnt to a cinder. When the housewife came back, she rated the beggar soundly; and was very much shocked to find she had been abusing her king. Another more touching story of Alfred's destitution and piety, is beautifully told by an old writer. "Upon a time, when his company had departed from him in search of victuals to eat, and he for pastime was reading upon a book, a poor pilgrim came to him and asked his alms in God's name. The king lifted up his hands to heaven, and said, 'I thank God of his grace that he visiteth this poor man this day by another poor man, and vouchsafeth to ask of me that which he hath given me.' Then the king anon called his servant, that had but one loaf, and a very little wine, and bade him take the half thereof unto the poor man, who received it thankfully, and suddenly vanished from his sight; so that no step of him was seen on the fen or moor he passed over; and also what was given him by the king, was left then even as it had been given unto him. Shortly after, the company returned to their master, and brought with them great plenty of fish that they had taken. The night following, when the king was at his rest, there appeared to him one in a Bishop's weed, and charged him that he should love God, and keep justice, and be merciful to the poor men, and reverence Priests; and said, moreover, 'Alfred, Christ knoweth thy mind and thy conscience, and now will make an end of thy care, for to-morrow strong helpers shall come to thee, by whose help thou shalt subdue thy enemies.' 'Who art thou?' said the king. 'I am St. Cuthbert,' said he: 'the poor pilgrim that yesterday was with thee, to whom thou gavest both bread and wine. *I am busy for thee and thine;* wherefore, have thou mind hereof when it is well with thee.'" Those among you who know what it is to realize help from the blessed in heaven, and to cast yourselves altogether into the hands of God, as little children, will, perhaps, feel some thrilling in your hearts, when the old chronicler adds: "Then after this vision Alfred was well comforted, and showed himself more at large."

All happened as St. Cuthbert said. In Wales a powerful earl conquered the Danes, and took their standard, which was always, with them, a token of victory. It was a Raven, woven at noontide by the three daughters of Ragnar, the greatest of the sea-kings. They lost heart. Then Alfred rose up, and disguising himself as a minstrel, went and played the harp in the Danish camp. By this means he saw their fears and weakness, and knew that the time was come to get back his kingdom. He called together the men of Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Somersetshire, to meet him at Egbert's Stone, in Selwood Forest; and they came flocking in joyfully at his summons. The troops were set in order on Bratton-hill, near Eddington, and after a fierce and bloody battle, Gothrun yielded himself prisoner. He agreed to become a Christian, and to leave Alfred in peaceful possession of his kingdom. The king had won a glorious victory. The fierce Dane, with thirty of his generals, agreed to put away their idolatrous worship, and to be baptised into the Christian church. Accordingly on an appointed day, they appeared in the white robes of baptism, with chrismal fillets bound round their hair; and Alfred himself stood sponsor for Gothrun at the font, where he received the name of Athelstan, and took the vows of a christian soldier, under the guardianship of the king he had done everything in his power to injure. Both kings then went to Wedmore for a week, during which, Athelstan, according to the beautiful custom of the time, wore his baptismal robes. We can easily fancy that Alfred took this opportunity of teaching and talking familiarly with his godson on the duties of a christian knight, and that the newly-received grace had already worked a great change in the Dane; for when on the twelfth day, he bid farewell to his generous host, and went back to the Eastern parts of England, Athelstan had conceived the most faithful friendship for Alfred, and always kept to the terms of the treaty they had made together. He took as much care of Englishmen's lives as of his own Danes; he refused to take any of the English land that had not been given to him, and joined with Alfred in punishing apostates (or people who gave up their religion), and did every thing in his power to spread the true faith.

In considering the battle of Bratton-hill, or rather what followed upon the Danish war generally, we find out fresh lights in Alfred's character, and we become aware of a state of feeling which does not exist now. I do not say whether this is an evil, or not. I only take it for granted that it is interesting, even as a matter of curiosity, to know the reasoning, or the policy, or the way of acting, or all of these together, if we can, of a king who has been dead and buried a thousand years, and yet whose influence, and laws, and institutions, are still living among us here at the present time, and whose name in England, if not in all Europe, has always been coupled with the title of "glorious." Something more than common strikes us in the whole of Alfred's policy, and it is worth while to find out whether it is because it is "gone by," because it was a policy of a thousand years ago, or whether it was in itself altogether different. Whether, in short, Alfred was guided by altogether different motives and ways of look-

ing at things, to those which produced (we will say) the blockade of Canton, and the war in India.

In the first place, Alfred seems to have trusted much more than is now general, to the *direct* overruling of God's Providence in his cause. Together with his father and brother, he seems to have begun every event with prayer, assisting at the offering up of the holy sacrifice of the altar, before battle, that the God of battles might be on his side. This was, no doubt, everywhere the custom. When the soldier was confessed, and had received the holy eucharist, the "food of the strong," he felt ready for every emergency that could arise. His body was the more fit for deeds of valour, because his soul was fully committed to God's keeping. Hence, therefore, those wonderful deeds of bravery (at which we, some of us, suspiciously raise our eye-brows), by which single-handed men seem to have possessed the strength of hundreds.

Alfred again does not seem to have had it in view merely to extend his kingdom, or recover what he had lost, to get possession of the Danish chiefs, by way of making the most of them. He does not seem to have tampered with their faith towards one another, or to have made offers to one in prejudice to another. For instance, he might have decoyed Halfdane into his camp by the promise of Gothrun's crown, and then have put him to death, under the excuse that he was an intruder in England, as he certainly was. He might then have easily taken the East-Anglian crown for himself, and extended his power and civilization over a much larger portion of England. But Alfred does not seem to have thought of this. He wished to restore peace to his kingdom, that it might serve God in quietness; not to enlarge it, by grasping at more than God had given him. He was more anxious to help other princes to civilize their own people, than to perform the office himself in a forced manner. Again Alfred seems to have been convinced that the only real road to peace is to unite men in the bonds of the church Catholic; and seems to have known that all treaties are mere waste paper, and mockeries of good faith, unless they are held together by the lasting cement of heavenly charity; and that this alone, and not commercial relations, can bind nations together with lasting ties. He does not seem to have been gifted with that tolerant spirit which considers it a matter of indifference whether a king's ally be a christian, or a pagan, or an idolater; much less do we find him making concessions with regard to Woden, or to have conciliated the Danes, by tolerating for a while their idolatrous sacrifices. It must be a new-fashioned notion that a man's religion is a matter between himself and God, in which no one else has any concern; for Alfred, in the simplicity of his day, never rested till he had brought his enemies to the cleansing waters of salvation, and enlisted them for ever under the banner of the cross. He then left them to the working of God's grace, enjoining on them only peace and the welfare of the church. For when he sent them away from Wedmore, with rich and splendid gifts (not from ostentation, but in the love of his royal host), he made them promise to help him to fight against the enemies of God; not considering that the church was able to take care of herself; but helping her, and spending for her in all things, like a dutiful and affectionate child. And, as we read, the Danes gave up their fierce, riotous ways, and became peaceful tillers of the ground, and good subjects of England.

And now being blessed with peace, Alfred turned his whole mind to the beloved object of his heart, the bettering and improving his people. First, he built strong and large castles wherever the Danes were most likely to land in his kingdom; next, he built a number of better ships; and then he altered and improved the whole administration of justice throughout the country. Whilst he had been battling with the Danes, the law had got into the hands of a number of petty magistrates, who did just as they pleased in the hamlets and villages, and gave verdicts in favour of the men who paid them best. To remedy this, Alfred heard as many cases himself as he could; and with wonderful patience, looked over all the judgments of these bad judges; forty-four of them were put to death in one year, which so frightened the rest, that they dared not take money for doing justice again as long as Alfred lived. With the help of his parliament, Alfred altered and improved the English law, and had it so well administered, that he hung up golden bracelets and jewels on the high-roads, and no one touched them. He taught the people how to build better and more comfortable houses, and got them better furniture, and founded schools both for rich and poor, throughout the kingdom. I told you he had invited a great many learned and clever men to his court; one of them, his own dear friend and companion, was Asser, a monk of St. David's in Wales, whom he made bishop of Shurburn. Asser never left the king after this; he was with him, as he himself says, in all his joy and sorrow. John of Saxony was another learned man who came; and Grimbald, from Rheims in France. The king ordered that every child in the kingdom should learn to read and write, and Latin besides, if he was intended for a profession. He sent messengers to the Baltic Sea, and the North Cape, to Bulgaria, Sclavonia, Bohemia, and Germany, to get information of those countries; and when he had heard what they told, he translated it into English, to amuse and instruct his people. It would have been impossible for Alfred to do all this without being very exact and regular in his habits, and this brings us to another part of his character, which we should do well to imitate. He divided the day into three parts of eight hours each. Three times eight you know, makes 24. He took 8 hours for the affairs of the kingdom, 8 for devotion and study, and 8 *for sleep, meals, and amusement.* As he had no clocks or watches, he invented something which did instead. He had a certain weight of wax made into six candles, twelve inches long, with the inches marked on them. One inch of wax burned for 20 minutes, so that each candle burned 240 minutes or 4 hours. And because the wind blew through the doors and windows, and chinks of the palace (you see he did not live in great luxury), Alfred put his wax clock into a case of thin horn, and thus became the first inventor of *horn lanterns.* His revenue was also divided with the same exactness, into two parts. The first served for the expenses of his court and ministers, to reward strangers and extraordinary services, and to build public works. For he made beautiful palaces in different parts of his kingdom, that he might see with his own eyes what was going on; and he rebuilt London, and some other cities the Danes had burned, in greater splendour, and with a better style of architecture. The other half of his revenue

Alfred spent in founding schools, in supporting a monastery and a convent, in alms-deeds to the church and to the poor. He founded a school for nobles, to which he sent his son Edward, and which was most likely the beginning of the venerable University of Oxford. As to education, Alfred does not seem to have considered it a matter of state policy, nor to have taken it into his own hands; for when he began translating his books for the people, he wrote to the bishop of London a letter beginning thus: "I wondered greatly at first that of all the good wise men who were in our nation, none would translate any part into their own language; but I soon considered, they never thought men would be so reckless (forgetful), and that learning would be so fallen. I think it better, however, *if you think so*, that we do translate some books, that we all may know them, &c." Accordingly he ordered that if any nobleman had not a son, or was too old himself to go to school, he should send a servant to learn to read, that he might be read to by some one. As to his alms to churches, Alfred seems to have been actuated by the sincerest desire of drawing the bonds of Catholic charity closer between people and people. He sent presents to Northumberland, Cornwall, and France, to the nations round the Mediterranean Sea, to Jerusalem, and very often to the Mother of Churches, his beloved Rome. Hearing that some christian colonies remaining in Malabar, in India, he sent bishop Swithelm thither to carry them some money, which difficult and dangerous journey the Bishop bravely performed, and brought back some pearls and spices, as presents from the colonists to the king.

And now having done all that he could to serve God and to better his people, the royal, but humble-hearted Alfred, must bring his labours to an end, and depart to another country, and to a better people, who were still more entirely beloved by him, even the city and Saints of God. He called together his Thanes, and with their good will divided his property between his two sons, his three daughters, his two nephews, his cousin, and his wife. He left some money to them, to his Earls, to his servants, and to each of his Bishops. He left something also to fifty Priests, to some other servants of God, to some poor in distress, and to the church in which he was to be buried. At the end of his will he spoke a few words, showing his fatherly care of his people to the last; to his son Edward, about some serfs or bondmen, whom he had made free. '*For God's love, my son, and the advantage of my soul, I will that they be masters of their own freedom, and their own will, and in the name of the living God I entreat that no man disturb them, but that they be left at liberty to serve any lord they may choose.*" Having so ordered, being worn out by severe and continual pain, and by his vast toils, but unwearied in his noble and holy labours, the christian King Alfred, having bade farewell to his friends, closed his eyes and gave up the ghost. His "mortal wede" was laid to rest in the Abbey of Newminster in Hampshire, a little before All-saints, in the year of our Lord 901.

It is the same at sea as at court; the wind that blows there governs every thing.

He who would keep Providence out of my sight, would take from me my only comfort.

THE LAST VESPERS OF ST. CLEMENT'S.

The Vespers, or Evening Service of the Catholic Church, were performed, for the last time, in the Convent of St. Clement's, at Clementhorpe, near York, on the 27th day of November, 1538, it being then suppressed by Henry VIII. A few scattered stones are all that now remain of this once beautiful house, wherein the Nuns of St. Benedict were wont, for many centuries, to praise God.

From Saint Clement's gothic tower,
Pealing o'er each hill and dell;
Sounding sweet in cot and bower,
O! it was the vesper bell.

Then the Priest of God was kneeling,
Clad in cope of silk and gold;
Music on the senses stealing,
Altars lovely to behold.

Silver lamps were dimly burning,
Censers waving sweet perfume;
Shrine of saint, with virgins mourning
Round the consecrated tomb.

Painted windows were displaying,
Christian lore in colours bright;
They the Crucified betraying,
In a flood of living light.

Saints and angels lowly bending,
In meek attitude of prayer;
Heav'n and earth seem'd all attending,
In the vesper chant to share.

Ah! Religion then was weeping,
For, beneath affliction's rod,
Her last vigil she was keeping
In this lovely house of God.

Sacred songs were then ascending,
Songs that holy love inspire;
Prayer and praise together blending,
Caught from David's sacred lyre.

Hymns of beauty sweetly flowing
From each soul-enraptured tongue;
Holy nuns devoutly bowing—
They Salve Regina* sung.

Then the sacred Priest addressing
Words of meekness from above,
Gave in tears to all his blessing,
With an everlasting love.

Convent sisters then departed
Forth to mingle with the crowd;
Forc'd by tyrants, iron-hearted,
From their holy solitude.

York, 1844. SIDNEY JOHNSON.

Equity.—A gentleman travelling in a gig in the vicinity of London, on coming to a turnpike, stopped for a ticket, and while the gate-keeper was procuring it, he threw the toll-money down on the road. The gate-keeper, with great coolness, took it up and placed the ticket upon the same spot, which the gentleman perceiving, and being anxious to proceed on his journey, requested him to giv it up; but turning on his heels, he said, "No, Sir, where I receives my money there I always leaves my receipt," and left the gentleman to take it up himself.

* Anthem from *Trinity Eve until Advent.*

A GOLDEN TREATISE ON MENTAL PRAYER.

THIS is a cheap reprint, published by Messrs. BOOKER and DOLMAN, of an admirable work by Saint Peter of Alcantara. It would be labouring "to gild refined gold, to paint the lily," if we attempted criticism on the book, for it was composed by one of the greatest masters of his age in the ways of spiritual life, and received the heartiest commendation of another, whose writings may be studied by children of the world for the most subtle and comprehensive knowledge of the operations of the human mind, and by devout servants of God for the highest lessons which fallen nature seems capable of receiving on ascetic and contemplative theology. "He is the author," says St. Teresa of the writer of this work, "of a certain little book on prayer, now much used; for as one who hath exercised prayer well, he wrote very profitably, giving most excellent rules to those who addicted themselves to prayer."

The present translation was made about the year 1630, by the Rev. Giles Willoughby, a Franciscan friar. He has preceded it by a very interesting Life of the Author, in which the features of his spirit are much more carefully and eagerly displayed, than any incidents of his merely human life. On the present occasion we will select a few passages from this biography, which we are sure our readers will peruse with pleasure and edification:

"THE blessed Peter was born at Alcantara, in the year of our Lord 1449, and in the reign of Ferdinand king of Spain. His father was called Bachilier Garavito, and his mother, Maria Villela de Senabria, both of good quality, but especially honoured for their virtues.

"They brought up their young son in the fear of God, and sowed in him the seeds of virtue: they put him to school where, as he profited in learning, so his obedience towards his parents did likewise increase. Although he was a child, yet he withdrew himself from the common sports of children, and sorted himself amongst men whom he saw inclined to devotion. In these his tender years, he addicted himself to the works of mercy: he applied himself seriously to learn the christian doctrine: he often visited churches and holy places, he frequented the sacraments, and continually employed himself in good works: all which did abundantly presage his future sanctity; but more confirmed it by that which followed immediately, for he was scarce sixteen years of age, when, before he knew, he began to loathe the world, and when the young sparks of his virtues began to break into a flame of devotion. He opened the doors of his soul to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost: and as he excelled his fellow students in science, so he knew that all science was ignorance without the right knowledge of God. Therefore, from that time forward he applied his mind to heavenly wisdom, and busied himself chiefly to know what should be most acceptable to his Sacred Majesty.

"About that time there was a famous and reformed monastery of Franciscans in the province of St. Gabriel, three miles from Valentia, whither he addressed himself, there to bring his good desires to a joyful period. When he came to the fathers, and asked the habit of St. Francis of them, who did grant it to him with as much charity, as he begged it with humility.

"But when this blessed Saint considered his poor habitation, sequestered from the company of men, and abstracted from all worldly tumults, and when he saw himself vested in his penitential weed, we may well imagine with what meditations he spurred himself forward in Almighty God's service. He spake to his own soul these or the like words, Behold, thou hast now accomplished thy desire, thou art now arrived to the land of promise, and climbed up to the highest mountain of Almighty God's favour to mortal man in this vale of misery, (that is), the sacred state of a religious life, where, by how much more thou art sequestered from the pleasures of the flattering world, the more thou enjoyest the freedom of thy spirit. Thou art now come to the house of God, in which it is better for thee to be an abject, than to dwell in the courts of princes. All occasions of offending thy Creator are now taken away, thy soul is now sure not to be defiled with the pitch of evil conversation. Thy company now are terrestial angels, who, though they live on earth, yet they have their conversation in heaven, all whose actions incite thee to nothing else but to aspire unto perfection. Thou findest here no snares to entangle thee into worldly vanities, no flatterers to applaud thee when thou dost offend, or any thing else to withdraw thy affection from the cross of Christ. Thy beloved Spouse hath brought thee now into this holy desert, to recreate thy soul with his heavenly consolations: here abstracted from all worldly tumults, it may attend only to divine wisdom; and the noise of all temporal cares, being hushed and silent, it may be wholly employed in sacred contemplation, and ravished with eternal pleasures. Almighty God hath now wafted thee over this troublesome sea, and placed thee here, in the quiet harbour of thy salvation, in which state, in respect of thy former, thou art far more sure to fall more seldom, rise sooner, stand more securely, live more sweetly, and die more confidently. Go to, I say, why standest thou still? why camest thou hither? Consider thy coarse habit, and see what penance it exacteth? Look upon the place, and reflect what spirit it teacheth thee? Be courageous and make no delay, thy death is certain, and thy hour uncertain, the Judge is at hand. Alas! the pleasure of this world is short, but the punishment for it perpetual. A little suffering here and infinite glory hereafter. Thus this new soldier of Christ spent his time, in holy discourses, sometimes of the majesty of Almighty God, sometimes of his own misery: although his precedent conversation to religion was a mirror of perfection, yet he stood not still in that grace he had already gotten, but continually aspired to higher, in which he far excelled his fellow novices. Two virtues were chiefly eminent in him: simplicity and purity. He likewise had a perfect oblivion of all worldly things. He greedily desired, and willingly accepted of the inferior and basest employments of the monastery. Neither did he esteem it a dishonour to him to cast himself at the feet of the friars, but was most willing to serve every one at their beck. In this his first year he laid such grounds of humility, that in his whole life after he was a rare example and pattern of this virtue. Neither when he was promoted to superiority did he leave off his humble exercises. Thus going from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, his good example was a burning lamp to give others light to imitate his virtues, that the whole monastery began every day more and more to flourish in regular observance, and in the opinion of the world, to get a great name of sanctity.

OF HIS NATURAL GIFTS.

"HE was of a spare body, but comely; he had a grave and modest look; his eyes were sparkling tokens of the fire of divine love which was in his soul invisible to the eye. There

was not one member in that man which was not subordinate to the rule of reason. His speech was meek and humble, his conversation angelical. He had an excellent natural wit, joined with a happy memory: he had likewise a singular good judgment (as appeared in his government:) he was courageous in going through with business, which did tend to the honour of Almighty God, and the good of religion: he was grateful to all, giving to every one their due respect: he was dexterous in his actions, modest in correcting: and a peace-maker, reconciling those who upon any occasion had been at jars. In his sermons he was hot, but moving; in hearing of confessions he was a helper, a counsellor, and a comforter: in his ordinary speech he was not fawning, nor biting, and his conversation without any pertinacity: and to conclude all in a few words—he was a man of another world, of whom we may justly say as Alexander Halensis said of St. Bonaventure, that he was a man, in whom *Adam seemed not to have sinned.*

OF HIS RELIGIOUS SIMPLICITY, AND MORTIFICATION OF HIS EYES.

"But to descend to particulars, wherein his religious simplicity was manifested. He was so absorbed in Almighty God, that he minded nothing of exterior things. When he was a young brother, keeping the keys of the pantry, for the space of six months, there was in the pantry grapes and pomegranates, which lay so palpably, that none could choose but see them, but he, for that space, neither saw, nor smelt, much less touched them: being asked why he did not give them unto the brothers, he humbly answered, that he knew of none that were there. Another time, living four years in another cloister, he never took notice of a great tree which stood in the midst of the court, which was obvious to every one's eye. Being a year in another place, and asked what his cell was made of, he answered, he knew not whether it was of stone, or brick, or wood. Neither was this mortification any stupidity of nature, or want of senses, but his continual busying his thoughts upon Almighty God, a more noble and higher object.

OF HIS GREAT PURITY AND HUMILITY.

"Upon a time, the Count Orapsane, a devout nobleman, came to visit him, and falling into discourse, how much Almighty God was moved with the sins of the world, out of his zeal breaketh into these speeches, 'O Father! what do you think? what will become of this wicked world? do you think the divine justice can contain itself any longer from revenge? behold, how virtue is oppressed, and sin triumpheth! how wilfully do we hoard up anger against the day of anger!' To which the man of God modestly answered and said, 'Noble Sir, do not afflict yourself; a remedy will easily be found to cure this disease; the point of the difficulty consisteth only in you and me, for the general perdition of mankind floweth from this fountain, that all and every one dissembling or cloaking their own sins, accuse the whole, when the whole cannot be said to sin at all, but particular persons in the whole. Wherefore, men cry out against the wickedness of the world, that all are naught, and none that do good, when if they would but look into their own particulars, they should find matter enough of sorrow, and to move themselves to do penance for their own faults; but now because they blame the whole, they neglect their own particulars, and justify themselves with a sottish presumption. Therefore, noble Sir, let your Lordship, and I, mend one a-piece, and then a great part of the world will be amended; we shall appease the angry Judge, and repair a great part of the ruin of mankind by our good example.'"

(To be continued.)

MOUNT THABOR.

From the "Forget me not" for 1842.

'Tis evening upon Thabor's hill,
And, like a sheet of gold beneath,
Reflecting forest, star, and rill,
Sleeps broad and bright Gennesareth;
Yet still four wayworn pilgrims climb,
Thabor, thy precipice sublime.

And now, with fainting steps and slow,
The four have reached the summit-plain;
And now their wearied limbs they throw
Amid its harvest's yellow grain—
But One alone is kneeling there,
With lip and heart in mighty prayer.

And now has sunk the last red beam,
Still on the ground the three are strown,
In the deep sleep that knows no dream.
Still One is kneeling there, alone,
Still fix'd beneath the dark'ning sky,
With clasping hands and heavenward eye.

'Tis night, and silence o'er the land;
In cot and palace all is sleep,
From Sion's towers to Syria's sand.
But radiance glows on Thabor's steep;
And hosts, on gold and purple wing,
Pay homage to their pilgrim King.

And two, on splendour's richest tide,
Are floating o'er the mountain's brow,
And now they worship at His side.
Are those thy vassals, Man of Woe?
Light folds Thee like a regal robe,
Light crowns Thee, Monarch of the Globe!

They speak the living words of Heaven,
Of Death absorb'd in victory,
Of Satan chain'd, and sin forgiven,
Of man redeem'd, and nature free,
Of mercy's starry diadem,
And earth illumin'd by its beam!

The sleepers wake; their startl'd gaze
Sees pomp of more than star or sun,
And, flashing in its central blaze,
Pilgrim no more—the Mighty One;
And Israel's chief, and Israel's seer,
Elias, Moses, bending there.

Are those the forms of hoary time,
The wanderers in our vale of tears?
They stand in manhood's noblest prime,
Unstain'd by woe, unworn by years;
The cherub crown, the cherub plume,
Their trophies o'er the mortal tomb.

Veiling his glory-dazzl'd eyes,
Cries Peter's heart in ecstacy,
"Here let three tabernacles rise,
The first and mightiest, Lord, to Thee!"
But, hark! the thunder's awful roll
Bows to the dust his ardent soul.

Down stoops the cloudy canopy,
And all are wrapt in light divine!
And shall not Faith's exulting eye
Thus see the second Advent shine,
And, waking in the world alone,
Behold the pomp, the King, the throne!

SIMPLE & CHEAP AMUSEMENTS IN GERMANY.

What now, amongst the Germans, strikes every liberal lover of his country, every man who has no motive but to see the truth and spread it, especially in our own beloved country? He sees a simple and less feverish state of existence. He sees a greater portion of popular content diffused by a more equal distribution of property. He sees a less convulsive straining after the accumulation of enormous fortunes. He sees a less incessant devotion to the mere business of money-making, and consequently a less intense selfishness of spirit, a more genial and serene enjoyment of life, a more intellectual embellishment of it with music and domestic entertainment. He sees the means of existence kept by the absence of ruinous taxation, of an enormous debt recklessly and lavishly piled on the public shoulders, by the absence of restrictions on the importation of articles of food, cheap and easy of acquisition. He sees, wherever he goes, in great cities or small towns, every thing done for the public enjoyment. Public walks, beautifully planted, and carefully accommodated with seats at convenient distances for the public to rest at leisure. He sees these walks laid out wherever it be possible. Old town-walls and ramparts are converted into promenades, commanding, by their elevation, the finest prospects over town and country. The whole of the city or town is encircled by them. Thus the old as well as the young can ascend from the heat, and dust, and hurry of the streets, and enjoy the freshest air, and the most lively, and yet soothing scenes in the streets below on one hand, or gaze into the green fields and hills around. It is delightful to see, on fine days, the grey-headed fathers of a city thus seated on these airy walks, beneath their favourite limes, and enjoying their chat together over old times; while, within a few steps of home, their eyes can still wander over those distant scenes whither their feet can no longer carry them. If there be an old castle in the suburbs of any of their towns, it is not shut up; but its gardens and its very walls, and courts, and fosses, are laid out in lovely walks, and the whole place is made the favourite resort and enjoyment of the whole population. There a coffee-house or cassino is sure to be found: and there, beneath the summer trees, old and young, rich and poor, sit and partake of their coffee, wine, and other refreshment; while some old tower near is converted into an orchestra, and sends down the finest music for the general delight. He sees all sorts of gardens, even to the royal ones, and all sorts of estates, kept open for the public observation and passage through them; he sees the woods and forests all open to the foot and spirit of the delighted lover of nature and solitude. He sees all public amusements and enjoyments, as theatrical and musical representations, the very highest of this kind, kept cheap and accessible to all. There are no operas there, with boxes let at £300 per annum, with seats in the pit at half a guinea each. Twenty-pence is the price of gentility itself; and for fivepence may be heard, and in a good place, the finest operas performed, by the finest singers in the country. For fourpence may be attended the finest out-of-door concerts of Strauss or Lanner in the capital of Austria itself. He sees education kept equally cheap in school and university, kept within the reach of all, for the free use of all; and the school so systematized, as to answer the various requirings of every varied class or profession. He sees the church kept cheap, and the churches open and free to one man as well as another, without pews and property, where all should be open, the common meeting-place of the common family, before the common Father. He sees no church-rates imposed on stubborn and refractory consciences, but a voluntary contribution left to the voluntary attender of divine service. He sees musical and singing societies encouraged amongst the people, where the working classes, when the labours of the day are done, can meet and enjoy a refining treat. He sees these civilizing and refining influences extended over the open-air enjoyments of the Sundays and holidays of the common people in city and country.—*German Experiences, by William Howitt.*

THE PRESS.

The employment of the press was forced upon us, some years ago, in self-defence. The bitter calumnies of our enemies against the church were believed by many, because suffered to pass without contradiction; for those journals which were the most ready to assert the most atrocious accusations against her, refused to admit a word in her defence. The *Church* newspaper was therefore established for our protection, as well as to supply a convenient medium of communication between the Bishop and his clergy; and most successfully has it answered our intentions. It has from its commencement been ably conducted, and been continually gaining ground with all persons of intelligent and honest hearts; and for some time past it has sustained a high character both at home and abroad. That every article has been faultless—every correspondent judicious—and no point of discussion carried too far, I do not assert; but this much I will affirm—that those who are best acquainted with the troubles, and anxieties, and vexations which beset the editorial chair of a newspaper, and particularly a religious one, and that sick or well, present or absent, it must be published on a certain day and at a certain hour, feel agreeably surprised that in the course of so many years, so little matter really objectionable has appeared in its columns. It has been essentially useful in making known among our people the true principles of our Catholic Church, in her unity, doctrines, and discipline. Nor has it been less useful in counteracting the influence of certain journals which have been constantly employing the most vindictive and vituperative language against her. The truth of all this is so manifest, that I feel myself warranted in respectfully urging upon you the duty of using your influence in extending the circulation of this excellent journal in your several parishes and neighbourhoods, in a manner more hearty and zealous than some of you have hitherto done. I would also recommend to such of you as may have leisure, to write an article occasionally on some prevailing calumny or misrepresentation of the day. We shall thus render the press what it was undoubtedly designed to be by the Giver of all good, and what under His wise providence it will in time become—the promoter of truth, and the servant of religion. Not that I call upon you to be writers, for this may be inconvenient; and many of you have neither time nor inclination for such employment; but I do call upon you to support the *Church* newspaper, although every word or article may not be according to your views and wishes; for to expect this, would be to expect an impossibility. It must be conducted by one mind, and the minds of its readers are many. The press is an engine of vast power, and, if rightly directed, of immense importance, and it will be used in this diocese for good or evil, whether we hear or whether we forbear.—*Charge of a (Protestant) Colonial Bishop.*

Virtue never so entirely quits its hold upon a mind, but it leaves on it some marks that no change, how great soever it may be, has ever strength to efface.

"THE DARK AGES."

No task could be more worthy of a scholar and divine so eminently distinguished as the author of this volume, than a vindication of institutions which had been misrepresented for centuries, and a defence of men who had been maligned by those to whom they had been generous benefactors. "The monks of old" have had hard measure dealt them; their property was confiscated for crimes which were never proved, and was divided amongst the minions of a court whose profligacy was notorious; their characters were aspersed by those who could not appreciate their merits, and by those who would not tell the truth when its evidence was strongest before them; novels were written to prove that monks were monsters; and fictions still more outrageous, assuming the name of history, were received as authentic records of the vices of the cloister. "The dark ages of monkish superstitions" passed into a proverb, and a man incurred the danger of being denounced as "no good Protestant" if he ventured to suggest that these much-abused monasteries were in fact the refuge where science and learning found shelter from military barbarism and feudal ignorance; that they formed part of the ecclesiastical institutions which saved Europe from sinking, under successive tides of conquest, to the condition of Africa and Asia.

We have more than once protested against the sweeping condemnation pronounced on the mediæval state of Europe; we have shown, that in those days of apparent darkness the elements of life and light were silently accumulating and gradually collecting strength; when flood after flood of barbarians poured over Europe, the Romish Church collected whatever of mind survived the shock, and set intellect to work reconstructing the social edifice from the materials of its ruined structures:—

"It is impossible to get even a superficial knowledge of the mediæval history of Europe, without seeing how greatly the world of that period was indebted to the Monastic Orders; and feeling that, whether they were good or bad in other matters, monasteries were beyond all price in those days of misrule and turbulence, as places where (it may be imperfectly, yet better than elsewhere) God was worshipped—as a quiet and religious refuge for helpless infancy and old age, a shelter of respectful sympathy for the orphan maiden and the desolate widow—as central points whence agriculture was to spread over bleak hills and barren downs, and marshy plains, and deal its bread to millions perishing with hunger and its pestilential train—as repositories of the learning which then was, and well-springs for the learning which was to be—as nurseries of art and science, giving the stimulus, the means, and the reward to invention, and aggregating around them every head that could devise, and every hand that could execute—as the nucleus of the city which in after days should crown its palaces and bulwarks with the towering cross of its cathedral."

Mr. Maitland fixes on Robertson and Jortin as the foremost libellers of the monastic orders, and shows strong cause for filing a criminal information against them as calumniators. The discussion of the reproaches which they heaped upon monastic institutions, leads Mr. Maitland into a minute examination of the authorities they have quoted, either at first or second hand, and the result convicts Robertson either of ignorance or misrepresentation. He charges the monks with being unable to read the Breviary in an age when the Breviary itself had no existence; he assumes that all who signed documents with a cross did so because they were unable to write, though he might easily have ascertained that this form of signature was a religious ceremony, and was regarded as a kind of manual oath; he quotes the authority of Muratori to prove, that "many monasteries of considerable note had only one missal," the passage in Muratori referring to a single place, and that not a monastery, but a locality, where, on account of its spiritual destitution, a monastery was subsequently founded. The evidence adduced of the continuous study of the Bible, in the Monastic Ages, is complete; but it is so very minute in its details, that it could not easily be condensed; we shall, however, extract a few instances:—

"Anselm, bishop of Lucca, who died in the year 1086, according to his contemporary biographer, 'Knew almost all the Holy Scriptures by heart; and, as soon as he was asked, would tell what each and all the holy expositors thought on any particular point. I think that I have referred to what William of Malmesbury, who lived within fifty years of the time, says of Wulstan bishop of Worcester's custom of repeating the whole psalter on his journeys, to keep his attendant clerks from such vain talk as is the common snare of travellers; but I will here add his testimony, that 'lying, standing, walking, sitting, he had always a psalm on his lips, always Christ in his heart.' Hariulf, abbot of Aldemburg, and Lisiard, bishop of Soissons, contemporaries and biographers of Arnold, bishop of Soissons, who died in the year 1087, tell us that he did not speak a single word to any creature during three years and a half, which he spent in constant reading of the word of God, and meditation upon it. The contemporary biographer of Thierry, abbot of St. Hubert in the Ardennes, says, that he was so assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures, that he knew them by heart, and could quickly resolve the most difficult and obscure questions respecting them. Of Wolphelm, abbot of Brunwillers near Cologne, who lived until the year 1091, his disciple says, that he so profited in the reading of the Scriptures, that what he once read he never forgot. This may perhaps be meant to refer to more general theological reading; but, he adds, 'It is also worth while to mention, that this man of the Lord caused the whole of the Old and New Testament to be read through every year. The four gospels, however, as they could not be read at the same time, and in the same order, as the other books, he appointed to be read at four periods of the year, by four deacons, in the four sides of the cloisters.'"

We have read this work, both with pleasure and profit; and we think that the author has given the best proof of his firm adhesion to the Church of England, by showing that he is not afraid to do justice to Rome.—*Athenæum.*

Extraordinary Novelty in Manufactures.—The French have recently made some very remarkable discoveries, well worth notice across the Channel, in this country, by which they are enabled to make ornaments from "peat!" as all will admit, a most unlikely source from which to produce such articles. It appears that the peat, "when taken from the bog," is reduced by beating to a fine pulp, and is then placed under a press, to force out all humidity except such as is necessary to keep it sufficiently moist to receive impressions in the mould in which it is placed. In this state it may be converted into ornaments of every kind, such as are made in embossed leather. Rendered firm by a solution of alum, or other adhesive material, it forms a flooring of a cheap and durable kind. Of billiard tables, too, there are various specimens; one rich and beautiful one has been produced in France, valued at 15,000f. May not Ireland, with its ample bogs, turn this novelty in manufactures to advantage?